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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000509

SIPDIS

STATE DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS TELL BOUCHER THERE IS LITTLE HOPE
FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

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CLASSIFIED BY: TRACEY A JACOBSON, AMBASSADOR, EXE, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Three leaders of opposition political parties told South and Central Asia Assistant Secretary Boucher they had little hope for the development of democratic government in Tajikistan, then tried to blame this on lack of support from the United States Government. They offered no plans to change the situation themselves. End Summary.

12. (C) Boucher met with Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan Chairman Muhiddin Kabiri, General Secretary of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan Rahmatullo Valiev, and Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan Rahmatillo Zoyirov at the Embassy on April 21.

COMPLAINTS AND DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

13. (C) All three party leaders delivered prepared remarks to Boucher, somewhat defeating the intended informal and private atmosphere of the event. All complained that they had previously enjoyed warm relations with the United States Embassy and had received support from the United States Government, but in recent years this relationship had ceased. They also criticized the international community for what they perceived as rhetorical support for Rahmon. Valiev commented that the results of the National Bank audit showed that aid money only fed corruption. He complained that the United States and other countries paid much attention to Afghanistan when, he claimed, there was less political freedom in Tajikistan. He added that Boucher should have met with the political party heads before meeting President Rahmon, so they could convey their concerns prior to his official meetings.

14. (C) Zoyirov expected no breakthroughs toward democracy, saying the government had lied for the past ten years by claiming it intended to reform the election law. He favors legal and peaceful actions to change the government, but it is now harder to restrain Tajiks from illegal and violent action, he said, and a revolutionary situation is taking root as Rahmon's control is slipping. He asked whether the United States Government had any position on the political problems in Tajikistan.

DREAM OVER

15. (C) Kabiri of the Islamic Revival Party agreed with everything Zoyirov said, and adding that while political parties in Tajikistan need assistance, they no longer have any "romantic illusions" about strong outsider support. The five Central Asian republics have convinced the United States that secular authoritarian governments are the only option to support, because there is no alternative save radical Islamist governments. No one in the region believes in the possibility of moderate leaders, leaving the field to extreme secularists and extreme Islamists, both of whom are growing in influence. Tajik youth see no prospects for change through elections, so seek extremist solutions.

16. (C) Boucher replied to these concerns by emphasizing that he raised electoral reform and corruption with the President, and that the embassy is supporting democracy through its advocacy and cooperation with the OSCE, and USAID programs. Noting that the United States Government does not give money directly to the Government of Tajikistan, he said that elections are a chance for us all to push for issues of common interest. He asked what the parties are doing themselves to improve the conduct of elections and expand their influence. Only Kabiri offered an answer, saying the Islamic Revival Party is ready to place monitors in every polling station. But he wondered whether doing so would be a waste of money, if the results are fixed anyway. He said government rhetoric is unhelpful, as President Rahmon in his recent annual address to the nation called on political parties to put "national interests" above the interests of the parties or "foreign bosses." He predicted that the only change likely in Tajikistan is a narrowing of political

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space under increased government pressure. Kabiri wishes for the return of the National Democratic Institute to Tajikistan, to strengthen independent political parties.

COMMENT: FOLD EARLY AND FOLD OFTEN

17. (C) The only politician present from a party with seats in parliament, Kabiri, was not forward leaning about changing election laws or practices, seeming to accept defeat in advance, despite his party's possession of two parliamentary seats and claims to tens of thousands of members. His performance did not dispel our impression of him as an inactive party leader. His colleagues were equally negative, and represent organizations with a few thousand members at best and little hope of ever coming back into parliament. None elaborated on ways their parties might take advantage of the current situation to strengthen their positions.

18. (C) Comment Continued: Perhaps more interesting were the circumstances of the two invitees who did not attend this meeting: Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, former Deputy Prime Minister, current member of the upper house of parliament, former top religious official, and an opposition figure in the civil war, told Embassy he could not attend because he did not wish to invite an increase in the already heavy pressure he and his family were feeling from the government due to his denunciations of the new law on religion (septel describes Foreign Minister Zarifi's allegations that Turajonzoda was scheming to establish an Islamic state). Turajonzoda is reputedly wealthy, and the Government may know how to hurt him, as it could hurt allegedly

wealthy Muhiddin Kabiri. The other no-show was Shodi Shabdolov, whose Communist Party has three seats in parliament, and 3-4 other independent members of parliament voting with them. Shabdolov has in recent months taken vocal stands against some government policies, suggesting the Communist Party is becoming more active. But at the last minute he told the embassy by telephone that he had forgotten about the meeting with Boucher, and could not drive over in time. End Comment.

19. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher cleared this cable.
JACOBSON